

PDC 16: George Washington Regional Commission

Introduction

Situated midway between Richmond, Virginia and Washington, D.C., the George Washington Regional Commission (GWRC), formerly the Rappahannock Area Development Commission (RADCO) Planning District is one of rapidly changing land use patterns. Straddling the East Coast's most heavily traveled interstate, I-95, the area is made up of Stafford, King George, Spotsylvania and Caroline counties, along with the City of Fredericksburg and the towns of Bowling Green and Port Royal. As the highly urbanized I-95 corridor grows to the east and west, nearby agricultural areas absorb the pressures of the rapidly expanding population base and its increasing need for housing, transportation and services. Expansive agricultural tracts interspersed with large-lot suburban properties and typical suburban subdivisions flank the intensely developed interstate corridor.

The region continues to experience a rapid growth rate. In 2000, the region had a population of 241,044. By 2005, the population had increased to 296,900 an increase of 23%. In fact, all the localities in the region experienced growth in that 5 year period. Future growth is anticipated to be rapid, with the population in the region projected to increase 58% to 380,700 in 2020 from its 2000 population level of 241,044. Stafford, Spotsylvania and King George Counties are among the fastest growing in the state, with growth rates of 26.9%, 26.1% and 19.0%, respectively, from 2000-2005. The presence of Lake Anna has provided the catalyst for the development of a large retirement community. As the population of the area continues to grow, conflicting interests will compound the task of protecting and managing the region's resources. In preparing for the future, plans for the George Washington Region should include the protection and preservation of natural and manmade resources, access to outdoors recreational facilities and open space by all residents, and the development of livable communities. Resource protection strategies should include consideration for land uses immediately adjacent to the significant historical and natural resources of the region. It is essential that these unique resources not be compromised by the negative impacts of inappropriate development in adjacent areas.

Tourism is a key element in the George Washington region's economy. With an abundance of historical and cultural resources of both state and national significance, the area is a popular tourist destination. Civil War battlefields, historic buildings and gardens attract over a million visitors to the region every year. The 2006 *Virginia Outdoors Survey* documents the fact that state residents enjoy visiting historic sites and natural areas ranking these as 3rd and 5th among their preferred outdoor activities. Visiting gardens ranks 13th. Walking for pleasure holds the number one spot, while bicycling and hiking rank 12th and 15th, respectively. The combination of these elements suggests an effective strategy for continuing to attract visitors to the area while serving the needs of the resident population. Linking sites through the development of a well-integrated multi-use trail system will provide recreational opportunities for residents as well as visitors.

Proposed major development in the Fredericksburg area along the Rappahannock River at I-95 will have a considerable impact on the existing open space and the character of the region. With approximately 2,500 sites slated for development to include a mix of offices, hotels, convention centers, homes and retail establishments, the effect will be considerable. Project design considerations should include site selection and treatment that is suitable to the topography, sensitive to environmental conditions and respectful of local history. Of particular importance is the location selected and the site design developed for the national slavery museum to be

included in this project. Care must be taken to create an atmosphere of solemn reflection and dignity appropriate to the theme of the museum.

Geographic characteristics

Bisecting the region on a north-south axis, roughly coinciding with the Fall Line, I-95 marks not only the area of most rapid development, but also the boundary between the rolling hills of the Piedmont to the west and the flatter, gently sloping Coastal Plain to the east. Many rivers and streams and their countless tributaries flow across the region. From the Potomac River in the north, south to the Rappahannock, the Matta, the Po, the Ni (coalescing to form the Mattaponi) and the North Anna rivers, the rivers and streams of the region provide ample opportunities for many types of water-based recreational activities. Flowing eastward across the region, rivers lose their rapids and flashy characteristics more typical of the Piedmont to widen into smooth-flowing tidal rivers flanked by wide floodplains with broad wetlands in the comparatively flat Coastal Plain. The Rappahannock River is valued as a recreational resource as well as for its scenic beauty. From its headwaters at Chester Gap to the Mayfield Ferry Farm Bridge below Fredericksburg, the Rappahannock has been designated a state Scenic River. The Rappahannock and the Potomac serve as gateways for the region to the Chesapeake Bay.

Demand/survey findings

Results of the 2006 *Virginia Outdoors Survey* indicate that despite the availability of a wealth of resources, user facilities for some activities remain marginal. Respondents to the survey indicated that access to water for boating, fishing, swimming and beach use is a definite need that is not being met adequately. A similar deficiency is seen in the limited number of miles of trails available for hiking, walking, bicycling, jogging and horseback riding. In addition, public playgrounds separate from those associated with local schools, and public swimming pools were listed as desired amenities.

As localities plan for the future and attempt to meet the outdoor recreational needs of their residents as expressed in the 2006 *Virginia Outdoors Survey* and local needs assessments, they are encouraged to include small neighborhood parks, larger regional facilities, trails that provide links within and between communities and access to water resources. Local governments within the I-95 corridor area must respond to an ever-increasing need for athletic fields. The creation of the Fredericksburg-Stafford Park Authority was an important step in the development of a regional approach to outdoor recreation planning. As the area continues to grow the need for multi-jurisdictional resource development and management will increase. Preservation of open space and natural resources within this rapidly changing area will be a challenge to all localities. The quality of life now enjoyed by residents of the area will be assured through comprehensive region-wide planning and the implementation of effective growth management strategies.

Specific needs have been identified in the George Washington Region area. These include:

- Local transportation alternatives, specifically, trails for walking, hiking and cycling. Trails must connect people with destinations and should be included within a comprehensive trails and greenways plan.
- Increased access to water-based recreational opportunities, which includes facilities for swimming (indoors and outdoors), boating and fishing, and the development of water trails.

- Additional playing fields to include facilities for baseball, basketball, tennis, volleyball and soccer.
- Additional golf courses.
- Additional parks with playgrounds, as well as minimally developed open space areas.
- Off-road areas for street-legal four-wheel-drive vehicles, ATVs and mountain bikes.
- Development of youth-centered recreational programs.
- Securing additional access to federal lands for recreational activities.
- Secure stable sources of funding to acquire, develop and manage public recreational properties.

Recognizing the impediments to open space preservation in the area, local governments are developing strategies for the development of comprehensive, regional park systems. Stafford County's Needs Assessment, for example, encourages the aggressive acquisition and development of properties noting, "Delays in implementation will only increase costs" Since current growth rates in the area have exceeded projections, many localities find themselves behind the curve in meeting recreational needs. Open space protection strategies should include inter-jurisdictional efforts to develop and maintain greenways and regional parks.

Localities are encouraged to work with local residents to identify and preserve the many historic features found throughout the region. Native American village sites, Civil War trenches and battlefields, historic river fords, the canals and mill sites along the Rappahannock River and the historic Spotswood furnace – all mark significant moments in the commonwealth's history, worthy of recognition and preservation.

Land Conservation

The land conservation map for the region includes existing conservation land in the following categories.

- State/Federal conservation lands: split by state and federal management agencies
- Local open space lands
- Conservation easements
- Designated historic districts and eligible historic districts

The acreages for each land conservation category are shown on the map. Future land conservation needs and direction should relate to the remaining resources that warrant protection for water quality, habitat, quality of life and economic viability of the area. Many organizations work together with localities and the region to provide an array of land conservation mechanisms. (See Chapter III. Land Conservation)

[Begin Textbox

Land Trusts Operating in George Washington Region

- Virginia Outdoors Foundation

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- The Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- Friends of the Rappahannock
- Northern Neck Land Conservancy
- Potomac Conservancy
- The Northern Virginia Conservation Trust.
- APVA Preservation Virginia
- Land Trust of Virginia
- The 500-Year Forest Foundation

End Textbox]

General recommendation for land conservation include:

- All localities should continue to promote the conservation and preservation of open space through land acquisition, conservation easements, stewardship agreements, the development of agricultural and forestal districts, the outright purchase of land or any of the many open space protection strategies presented in chapter III. Land Conservation.
- As population growth accelerates development pressure, land conservation and sound land use decision-making must become prominent considerations in all land-planning efforts. Localities, state agencies, and private organizations must make deliberate decisions about how to focus and prioritize their land conservation efforts. To do so, they must develop a method of targeting conservation efforts, using green infrastructure land planning techniques, geographic information systems, local comprehensive plans, and decision support systems such as the Virginia Conservation Lands Needs Assessment.

Green Infrastructure

- Local governments should take the lead in securing green infrastructure through planning and rezoning.
- Regional and local governments should adopt and implement the green infrastructure planning model to ensure sustainable development of their community and a high quality of life for future generations.
- Local and regional agencies and conservation organizations should receive information and education about green infrastructure planning including guidance on local zoning initiatives that lead to changes in community design and transportation systems.
- Sources of funding for local government green infrastructure initiatives should be identified and obtained.

Programs

Trails & Greenways

Trail and greenway planning initiated at the local and regional level is important for the future development of an infrastructure that promotes public health. Only a handful of local governments have a formally adopted trails plan. With only a small percentage of existing plans approved and integrated into the locality's comprehensive plan, there is a risk that development will continue to occur without consideration for people who want to integrate exercise into their

daily routine by walking, jogging or cycling to points of interest. Each locality should develop a trail and greenway plan, bicycle and pedestrian plan, and/or green infrastructure plan incorporating trails that will be adopted as a formal component of the comprehensive plan. In the plan, an effort should be made to link existing and proposed public lands and other resources valued by the community with businesses and neighborhoods.

Trunkline trails are statewide corridors connecting urban, suburban and rural areas of Virginia. Plans to establish routes and connect with other local and regional trails are important to the success of these major trails. Local, regional and state planners should work together to mediate issues that arise when trails cross jurisdictional boundaries, to provide bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure (including signage and amenities) and to get information out to the public. Trunkline trails existing or underway in Virginia and this Region include:

The **East Coast Greenway**, proposed to span almost 3000 miles from Maine to Florida, aims to connect all the major cities of the East Coast along a continuous, off-road path. This trail will make use of waterfront esplanades, canal paths, railroad corridors and park paths for cyclists, hikers, skaters, equestrians and people with disabilities as it connects urban, suburban and rural America.

The **Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST)** connects the outstanding natural and cultural features along a 700-mile corridor of the Potomac River from the Chesapeake Bay to the Allegheny Highlands. The National Park System manages this partnership, which has been the target of significant investments in funds, time and expertise by individuals, organizations and government agencies. Due to the National Scenic Trail designation, localities that host the PHNST should be cognizant of the need to protect the setting with buffers, setbacks, vegetative screening and similar viewshed preservation tools.

In developing trails as transportation alternatives, it is necessary that localities work with developers and one another to assure that trails actually link users with destinations, not simply provide walking loops within neighborhoods. Accommodations for cyclists within integrated trail systems should include improved safety considerations, appropriate signage and mapping, and separate bicycling lanes wherever possible. Although wide road shoulders provide bicycling opportunities, separate bicycling trails are preferred. Localities, counties and cities should determine appropriate roads for bicycle routes and work with the Virginia Department of Transportation to develop these routes by adopting local comprehensive pedestrian and bicycling plans. Growing interest in birding as a recreational pastime will add another dimension to trail identification and development, as will interest in other theme trails. It is strongly suggested that consideration be given for the development of an integrated trail system designed to link the many historical sites in the region.

General trail and greenway recommendations include:

- Local governments should have a greenways and trails component in their comprehensive plan that provides for a variety of leisure trail experiences and promotes pedestrian and bicycle transportation alternatives.
- State, regional and local governments should include funds for trail development, management and maintenance in annual capital and operating budgets, and seek creative

ways to provide incentive funding for trail development.

- State, regional and local governments should strengthen the public's understanding of the connection between trails and public health and establish policies that support pedestrian and bicycle facilities in road construction and development/redevelopment projects.
- DCR should partner with Planning District Commissions to a) facilitate communications between trail providers, users, and policy makers, b) encourage the private sector to improve regional and statewide trail opportunities and support and c) focus on regional trail networks to establish a trunkline statewide trail system.
- Local and regional trail managers should provide information about their trail at trailheads, in brochures and on Web sites so that users can choose sections within their skill and capability levels.
- Planning districts and local governments should consider the development of theme trails linking similar sites such as vineyards, historic districts and birding sites.

Trail/greenway proposals for this region include:

1. The development of a greenway/hiking/water trail system along the **Rappahannock River**. Linking the Upper and Lower Rappahannock basins, the segment of the trail in the George Washington Region could provide opportunities for canoe-in camping, access to historic sites and rock climbing areas. Preservation and enhancement of mill sites and the canal system along the Rappahannock River are suggested.
2. Identifying the proposed **Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST)** in all local comprehensive plans with development to follow as conditions permit. The Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail connects the outstanding natural and cultural features along a 700-mile corridor of the Potomac River from the Chesapeake Bay to the Allegheny Highlands. The National Park System manages this partnership, which has been the target of significant investments in funds, time and expertise by individuals, organizations and government agencies. The 50-mile segment in the George Washington Region, following the Potomac River through King George and Stafford counties, will link the area to state and county parks, wildlife refuges and wetlands. It will provide access to historical and cultural features along with marinas, schools, commercial areas and neighborhoods along the Potomac River waterfront. A link to the City of Fredericksburg is included in the plan.
3. Linking **Barnesfield Park** to the planned Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail.
4. The development of a multiuse trail along the abandoned **Dahlgren Junction Railroad** can provide links to the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, Barnesfield Park, the Caledon Natural Area and through to Sealston. Private efforts are currently underway to develop a trail on this corridor.
5. The development of the **Fredericksburg - Orange** trail along the old **Virginia Central Railroad** linking Fredericksburg to Orange. With two small sections complete, one in Alum

Spring Park maintained by the City of Fredericksburg, and the other linking a school and playing fields in Spotsylvania County, the proposed trail would provide access to Civil War battlefields, historic properties, schools, playgrounds and commercial sites.

6. The completion of the **South Stafford Bicycle Trail**. Reflecting the efforts of the Fredericksburg-Stafford Park Authority, the three-mile trail will link two parks in Stafford County.
7. Link the **South Stafford Bicycle Trail** with the **Old Mill Park Trail** proposed in the City of Fredericksburg.
8. **Interstate Bike Route 1** should be enhanced and properly identified.
9. The **East Coast Greenway**, as proposed, will pass through the George Washington Region. Local planners should coordinate with the East Coast Greenway Planning Committee to ensure that the selected corridor is consistent with local plans. The East Coast Greenway, proposed to span almost 3000 miles from Maine to Florida, aims to connect all the major cities of the East Coast along a continuous, off-road path. This trail will make use of waterfront esplanades, canal paths, railroad corridors and park paths for cyclists, hikers, skaters, equestrians and people with disabilities as it connects urban, suburban and rural America.

Blueways and Water Access (Boating, Beaches & Swimming, Pier and Bank Fishing, Natural Areas)

Beach Access Recommendations

- Cooperative agreements among localities and other agencies, as well as private landowners, are encouraged in order to meet the increasing need for public access to beaches and other water-related recreational resources.
- In cooperation with localities, state land management agencies should identify strategies to make additional waterfront resources available for public use.
- Adequate support facilities and services, such as restrooms, concessions, parking and maintenance should be a priority for existing and proposed public water and beach access areas.
- Public agencies need to acquire and/or maintain access to existing public beaches that may be jeopardized by changes in land use or development activities.

Water Trail Recommendations

- The navigable rivers of the state should be managed as water trails. Public access areas and support facilities should be developed at appropriate intervals along these rivers.
- Regional and local governments should work with state agencies to market water trails through brochures, maps, signage and the media.

- Local jurisdictions should encourage both private and public landowners to operate rest stops and boat-in-only campgrounds along water trails at suitable site locations along Virginia rivers and streams.

Water Access Recommendations

- Provide an additional 49 water access points in the Chesapeake Bay watershed in Virginia to meet the commitments of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement.
- Old ferry crossings/landing site sand bridges should be considered for opportunities for water access.

Despite the abundance of rivers and streams in the region, public access to them is limited. George Washington Region residents cite a scarcity of boat launches and minimal opportunities for bank fishing and swimming. Where the opportunity exists, access through land acquisition or use agreement should be pursued. The development of portages around dam sites and other river obstacles is encouraged to facilitate river use. In addition, water trails should be developed along the Rappahannock, the Potomac and other rivers in the area.

Water access considerations for the region should include the following:

10. Additional boating and fishing access at **Lake Anna**.
11. Additional access should be provided on all rivers in the region including the **Potomac, Rappahannock, North Anna, Matta, Po, Ni and Mattaponi**.
12. The development of water trails along the **Rappahannock River** and the implementation of the **Potomac River Water Trail** from Washington, D.C. to the Chesapeake Bay, as suggested by the guide prepared by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and Maryland's Department of Natural Resources.

Historic and Landscape Resources

- Each locality in the region should make every effort to identify historic and archaeological resources within each jurisdiction that can be used for economic, tourism, recreational and educational benefits, and should include those resources in all local land use planning and decision-making processes to promote preservation and protection of these resources.
- Local historic attractions, historical societies, museums and other tourism organizations in the region should build partnerships with the Virginia Association of Museums, Virginia Civil War Trails, the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities/Preservation Virginia, the Virginia Main Street Program and others to enhance local heritage tourism, educational and recreational offerings.
- Local governments and private organizations owning historic properties in the region should be encouraged to manage those properties effectively for long-term protection of the public trust and to maximize public benefit consistent with the nature of the historic property.

Scenic Resources

The following are general recommendations for scenic resources in the George Washington Region:

- Each locality should conduct a visual resources assessment as part of their green infrastructure inventory and mapping process. Consider using universities and other institutions to help supplement and support this effort.
- Localities should ensure that a component of their comprehensive plan provides for the protection and enhancement of scenic resources, visual character and viewsheds.
- Localities should develop corridor management plans for scenic byways, blueways, and greenways to assure preservation of the scenic quality of the corridor.
- Scenic corridors in the George Washington Region should receive consideration by local and regional plans for viewshed management. Management of Virginia's scenic resources is linked to economic prosperity of the state as it relates to tourism and the overall aesthetic character of the Commonwealth for business, industry and residents.

Scenic Highways and Virginia Byways

There has been a tremendous interest in thematic trails including, Civil War Trail, the Wilderness Road Trail, the Birding and Wildlife Trails, the Revolutionary War trails, the African-American Heritage Trail and other driving tour routes. The next logical step after the *Scenic Roads in Virginia* map would be to develop a series of regional maps or booklets that describe and help locate the resources and services found in all sections of the state.

The following are general recommendations regarding scenic highways and Virginia Byways in the George Washington Region:

- Local jurisdictions should recognize and nominate scenic roads for designation as Virginia Byways.
- Local governments should partner with other state, local and professional organizations to determine implementation strategies to protect the scenic assets of byway corridors.

The following roads have been recommended to be designated as a Virginia Byway:

- 13. Route 208** in Spotsylvania County, through the battlefield area to the Louisa County line has been recommended for consideration as a Virginia Byway.
- 14. Route 3** in King George, Stafford and Spotsylvania Counties has been recommended for consideration as a Virginia Byway.

Scenic Rivers

The following are general recommendations regarding scenic rivers in the George Washington Region:

- Local government should nominate candidate streams and rivers for study and possible Scenic River designation.

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- DCR should assist local governments with development of planning tools (e.g., land-use overlays, corridor management plans) that will afford special recognition and protection to Virginia's Scenic Rivers.

The following river section has been designated as a State Scenic River:

15. The Rappahannock River from its headwaters to the Route 3 Bridge at Ferry Farm is a legislatively designated Scenic River. Impacts to the **Rappahannock River** from proposed commercial development along the riverbanks should be carefully evaluated. As a state Scenic River, the Rappahannock River should be protected as a unique regional resource. Inappropriate development that compromises the scenic qualities of the river and the enjoyment of its natural beauty should be discouraged. Appropriate setbacks and buffers should be incorporated into plans to assure the preservation of the river corridor. This will include consideration for impacts to water quality.

The following river segments have been evaluated and been found worthy of designation as a **Virginia Scenic River**:

16. The **North Anna River** in **Caroline County**, from Route 738 to Route 1 at Chandler Crossing.
17. The **Rapidan River** from Germana Ford to the confluence with the Rappahannock River.

The following river segments should be evaluated to determine their suitability as a **Virginia Scenic River**:

18. The **Rappahannock River** from the Route 3 Bridge at Ferry Farm to the Mayfield Bridge in Fredericksburg to the Chesapeake Bay.
19. The **Mattaponi River** in its entirety.
20. The **North Anna River** from Lake Anna to Route 738.
21. The **North Anna River** from Route 1 at Chandler Crossing to the confluence with the Pamunkey River.

Watersheds

The following are general recommendations regarding watersheds in the George Washington Region:

State what river watershed the PDC is in. (List of local watershed groups will be included in a later draft) Debbie is getting from Soil & Water watershed offices).

General watershed recommendation:

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Regional and local governments should protect the management of watersheds by integrating watershed management planning with local land use ordinances and comprehensive plans through DCR's Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act land use management initiative.

Environmental and Land Stewardship Education

Outdoor Environmental Education needs are being assessed for each region. The information about potential outdoor education facility needs will be identified in a later draft.

Federal Facilities

When federal properties become surplus, their potential recreational and natural resource values should be evaluated for possible inclusion in state or local open space or outdoor recreational plans.

National Parks

The following are general National Parks recommendations for the George Washington Region:

- Continue to develop multi-modal connections to NPS sites, as a component of an interconnected, statewide system of trails and greenways. Support efforts underway at parks such as Petersburg, Appomattox, and Richmond that are currently engaged in efforts to link battlefields, historic sites, parks, and communities.
- Work with state agencies to elevate battlefield protection in various land conservation, scenic viewshed, and heritage preservation initiatives. Utilizes partnerships to identify, prioritize, and develop strategies to protect critical resources.
- Continue collaborative efforts through the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Water Trails Program and Potomac Heritage National Scenic to connect people to heritage, outdoor recreation, and educational opportunities and resources.

The following recommendation is made as it relates to National Parks in the George Washington Region:

22. The Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, at 9,000+ acres, is the largest military park in the world. Composed of several battlefield sites, cemeteries, and historical structures, the park hosts more than one million visitors annually. Localities are encouraged to work with the National Park Service to link park sites with other attractions within the region through the development of an integrated trail system. In order to protect this important historic resource, localities should strongly consider the impacts of future **development in areas adjacent to park lands**. The park should work with VDOT and local jurisdictions on traffic planning that accommodates the growing population yet protects the battlefields' historic resources.

National Wildlife Refuges & Fish Hatcheries

The following is a general recommendation for the George Washington Region:

- Continue to explore opportunities to acquire additional sites along the Potomac River to help

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protect eagle habitat and other natural heritage resources.

23. Established on May 28, 1996, the **Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge** is a component of the Eastern Virginia Rivers National Wildlife Refuge Complex, which also includes James River and Presquile national wildlife refuges. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is authorized to purchase up to 20,000 acres within the boundary refuge area. As of July 2001, a total of 4,800 acres has been purchased from willing sellers.

Other Federal Facilities (Military)

24. **Fort A.P. Hill** periodically hosts the international Boy Scouts of America Jamboree, an event attended by 40,000 participants in 2001. Local residents are interested in access to parts of this facility for trail use, specifically hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding and ATV use. Groups are encouraged to contact appropriate authorities at A.P. Hill to develop working agreements for use. Currently, each request is considered on a case-by-case basis.

State Facilities

State Parks

Lake Anna State Park (2,810 ac) located in Spotsylvania County. Additional acreage has been acquired using the 2002 GOB acquisition funds. The acquisition further protects the park boundaries as well as the lake shore. Through the bond, the park was provided funding to construct 10 2-bdrm cabins and a full service (water & electric hook ups) campground. The need for picnic shelters continues to exist. The trail system has increased with approximately 14 miles of multiuse trails. Additional trails are planned for the new acreage.

Caledon Natural Area (2,585ac) located in King George County- Although no new facilities were added with the 2002 GOB; the bond provides funds for trail improvements. With 9 miles of hiking trail, opportunities abound to expand the hiking opportunities. Interpretation and environmental education focusing on the bald eagle are prominent offerings at the park. The natural and cultural resources of the site offer extensive opportunities to expand the interpretive and educational offerings of the site. The proximity of Caledon to the Dahlgren Railroad Heritage Trail as well as the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail creates additional educational and recreational opportunities for the park and region.

Widewater State Park (1,089 ac) located in Stafford Co. Recommended for acquisition as far back as 1965 VOP, this property was acquired with 2002 GOB funds. The master plan has not been developed and will need to be approved prior to any development on the site. The park has "X" number of miles of shoreline on the Potomac River and "???" Creek providing additional open space protection in a rapidly developing region. In addition, much needed water access can be developed in a manner that enhances the shoreline. The potential also exists for the site to become part of the Potomac River Water Trail and Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail.

State Forests

The following are general State Forests Recommendations:

- The Virginia Department of Forestry will coordinate with, and seek the assistance of, local trail and river user organizations to develop forest trails and publish maps for each state forest as well as establish greenways and blueways for public use.

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- Localities should work with the Virginia Department of Forestry to develop strategies to improve the urban tree canopy.

Department of Game and Inland Fisheries Wildlife Management Areas

- The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries should continue to develop trail systems within wildlife management areas to facilitate access for activities other than hunting and fishing.

Natural Areas (needs updating)

As of March 2001, there were 48 conservation sites identified within the George Washington Region. Twenty-six (54%) are protected to some degree through ownership and management by state, federal and non-government organizations. Every effort should be made to protect the remaining sites. Although appropriate methods of protection for each site will vary, each should be included on Virginia's registry of natural areas. Additional preservation strategies include developing voluntary management agreements with landowners, securing conservation easements through local land trusts, actual acquisition of sites, and/or dedication of sites as natural area preserves. Specific information about each of these natural areas can be obtained in the Natural Areas subsection of Chapter VII.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation has documented 284 occurrences of 84 rare species and natural communities in the George Washington Region. Ten of these species are globally rare, and four are listed as threatened or endangered.

In August 2001 the Department of Conservation and Recreation secured an easement and natural area dedication for 1,107 acres along **Chotank Creek** and the Potomac River in King George County. Critical eagle habitat and other natural heritage resources will be protected at this site.

The **Crow's Nest**, a 4,500-acre peninsula of mature, second growth forest surrounded by 700 acres of freshwater tidal marshes, should be considered for preservation as a natural heritage area or a national wildlife refuge. Located in eastern Stafford County, the property supports a rich diversity of plant and animal species reflecting its many habitats. It is an extremely significant feeding and nesting stop for migrating songbirds and provides valuable habitat for waterfowl, fish and shellfish.

Transportation

Virginia is home to more of the United States Numbered Bicycle Route system than any other state. Since both USBR 1 and USBR 76 cross the state, Virginia hosts about 41 percent of the total USBR system. USBR 1 crosses the state north-south from Arlington to the North Carolina border near Kerr Reservoir, and USBR 76 crosses east-west from Yorktown to the Kentucky border in Dickenson County. These federal routes are officially recognized by AASHTO, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. These routes are shown on VDOT's official County Maps, and signed in the field.

In addition, Virginia also hosts parts of three other long-distance bicycle routes recognized by Adventure Cycling Association, which is dedicated to establishing a national system of long-

distance routes. The Trans-America Bicycle Trail crosses the country from Oregon to Virginia, and shares the same alignment as USBR 76 in Virginia. The Maine to Virginia Bicycle Route runs approximately 150 miles from Washington, D.C. to Virginia, generally along the same alignment as USBR 1, and the Virginia to Florida Bicycle Route covers 130 miles from Richmond to the North Carolina state line at Suffolk.

Transportation is integral to conservation and outdoor recreation. General recommendations relating to transportation for the region include:

- Greater emphasis needs to be placed on providing alternatives to the use of private automobiles for daily activities. Transit systems, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, improved community design, as well as a change in people's attitudes toward transportation alternatives will be needed for the transportation system of the future to meet capacity needs and energy constraints. (www.vtrans.org)
- Priority should be given to eliminating potential transportation barriers for the public, and improving the linkages of recreation areas across major transportation corridors.
- Local governments should encourage the development of a permanent process for integrating the recommendations of local health agencies and active living into all phases of land use planning.

Local and Regional Parks

All of the localities in the George Washington Region are served by a parks and recreation department. The towns of Bowling Green and Port Royal do not have their own department, but are served by the Caroline County parks and recreation department. According to the Commonwealth of Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, Comparative Report on Local Government Revenues and Expenditures, Year Ended June 30, 2005, per capita spending on parks and recreation for each locality in this region was: Stafford, \$38.17; King George, \$28.81; Spotsylvania, \$26.90 and Caroline, \$10.91; and the City of Fredericksburg, \$107.95. Bowling Green and Port Royal were not listed in the report. This compares to a statewide per capita spending on parks and recreation of \$55.31, including \$85.51 from Towns, \$43.75 from counties, and \$76.45 per capita spending on parks and recreation from Cities in Virginia.

Regional parks are local parks that due to their size, location or offerings have a regional significance.

The following are general recommendations for Local & Regional Park Systems:

- Localities should appoint a parks and recreation commission to provide citizen leadership with regard to parks and recreation issues and concerns. Commissions have been effective in many localities to enhance park areas and recreation programs.
- Commitments to the maintenance, management, and development of local parks and recreational systems are necessary. Localities should explore alternative methods of funding, such as set-aside ordinances, fees and charges and public/private partnerships. The establishment of a "friends group," which could possibly evolve into a "park foundation," should be considered for the local parks and recreation department. This

citizens group could be a source of volunteers, as well as a source for community support and other resources.

- Local parks and recreation departments should initiate a structured volunteer program that recruits, trains and retains volunteers, and recognizes their contributions to parks, programs and the overall quality of life in communities.
- All localities should develop and implement hiking and bicycling plans to connect parks, schools and neighborhoods. Encouraging biking and walking within the community can enhance community health and spirit.
- Parks and recreation programs need to be accessible to special populations, including senior adults and persons with disabilities.
- Consideration by localities of the benefit of a school/park cooperative agreement could enhance use of school and park facilities. School systems and local parks and recreation departments should cooperate in the design of new or renovated facilities. In order to increase local access, localities should consider cooperative management for the recreational use of private, corporate, state or federally owned lands.
- All public playgrounds, including school and park playgrounds, should meet or exceed the guidelines established by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission and published in the USCPSC Handbook for Public Playground Safety. All equipment should have a cushioned surface under and around it.

Private sector

The private sector plays a significant role in providing recreational opportunities in the commonwealth. Developed campgrounds, resident summer camps for children, golf courses, tennis courts, swimming pools, marinas and indoor recreational facilities help meet the needs identified in the 2000 *Virginia Outdoors Survey*. Within the George Washington region, entrepreneurial opportunities exist for the establishment of outfitter services for canoeing and kayaking, boat launches, canoe-in campgrounds, multi-field sports complexes and swimming pools. Private landowners might consider fee-based hunting, fishing and boating access. Familiarity with the *Landowner Liability Law, Code of Virginia, Chapter 29.1-509* could encourage some landowners to enter into an agreement with a unit of government to provide public access while minimizing their liability. As many localities prepare for substantial increases in residential growth, consideration must be given for the inclusion of mechanisms within the permitting process to encourage or require the preservation of open space and the development of recreational amenities to meet communities' needs.

The following are general recommendations regarding the private sector's role in outdoor recreation and land conservation:

- Encourage public outdoor recreation providers to partner with multiple private sector organizations.

- Recreational use agreements and/or easements should be encouraged for private property owners providing public recreation opportunities and to make more private lands available for recreation.
- Efforts should be made by DCR and local parks and recreation departments to make existing and potential private sector providers of outdoor recreation, especially where applicable to trails and greenways development, knowledgeable about the Virginia Landowner Liability Law.
- Local, state and federal outdoor recreation providers should support corporate recognition programs and improve corporate recognition for small business willing to incorporate outdoor recreation needs in an environmentally friendly manner.